Prairie Update

A publication of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority *Volume 29 Fall 2006*

Burrowing Owls Benefit from Landowner's Hospitality

Louis Huys and his family are not the only ones that have taken up residence on their land in the Missouri Coteau. For part of the year, it is also home to several pairs of endangered Burrowing Owls.

"There are four or five out in the yard here, just out the window. And up by my other pasture a half-mile away there's a couple sets up there again," says Louis.

The Huys' run a mixed farming operation near Rouleau. Part of their operation includes a section of land with about 60 acres of native prairie.

The remainder of the section was broken long ago for annual cropping. But according to Huys, this land had never been particularly productive, and it was often difficult to work. So Huys decided it would be much more useful – not to mention profitable – if it were seeded to permanent cover.

"I was thinking of getting rid of some of this farmland that wasn't producing, and going to grass and cows," said Huys. "It flooded quite often, and then all the plant material would wash away. So it works good, now that it's grass."

Because of the presence of the Burrowing Owls on this land, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority was able to assist Huys with seeding 100 acres of cropland to perennial cover, and to construct a half-mile of fence so the new tame grass could be used for pasture.

Funding for the project was provided by the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk.

Burrowing Owls prefer dry, open, treeless plains and pastures with short grasses for nesting, but they have also been known to nest in annual cropland or beside roadways. By converting cropland to perennial pasture, Huys is providing the owls with habitat they can use to hunt, and maybe even nest on someday.

Year after year, the owls return from their wintering grounds in Texas and Mexico to the same general area from mid-April to mid-May. There, about two weeks after their arrival, they will lay between six and 11 eggs, which will then be incubated for another four weeks or so.

By late June the young owls begin to explore the area outside their burrows, and to congregate around the burrow entrance waiting to be fed by the parents. Young owls will then often move to nearby burrows when the nest burrow becomes overcrowded.

By August the young owls will have learned to fly and hunt, and may move as far as three kilometres from the nest area. They will then begin the migration back to their wintering ground sometime in September or October.

The new grass not only gives Huys additional forage for his herd, it also allows him to better manage the use of his native prairie parcel.

"I thought, 'If I could seed more grass, then I could stay off the native hay a little longer.' And it's definitely worked," says Huys.

He now pastures his cattle on the tame forage through spring and early summer, and defers grazing on the native pasture until early August. By deferring grazing on his native grass, Huys is giving it a chance to maximize its growth earlier in the season, leaving him a robust parcel of grass to graze on later.

What's New . . .

Take a look at some of the upcoming events and new projects and programs available from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and our partner agencies . . .

Two More Source Water Protection Plans Completed

Two locally developed plans to protect and manage source water in the Assiniboine River watershed are now complete.

The Assiniboine River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan provides a detailed action plan to protect source water in the Assiniboine River watershed, an area which includes 24 rural municipalities, eight towns, 15 villages and the cities of Melville and Yorkton.

The Yorkton Area Aquifers Source Water Protection Plan focuses on protecting the source water found in the aquifers in and around Yorkton. In this area, groundwater is virtually the only reliable supply of water for drinking, as well as for agricultural, industrial and municipal needs.

Advisory committee members recently attended an appreciation luncheon to celebrate the completion of the plan. The luncheon was also attended by Deputy Premier and Regional Economic and Co-operative Development Minister Clay Serby, on behalf of the Minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, John Nilson.

Research and Conservation Projects Receive Funding

Eight research and conservation projects being carried out by the University of Regina and Nature Saskatchewan will receive a total of $144,575 in funding support from Saskatchewan Environment's Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.

The University of Regina will receive $58,675 for pelican and cormorant research programs and to carry out a Saskatchewan census of other colonial birds. Nature Saskatchewan will receive $86,000 for the Living By Water Program, the Lake Diefenbaker Piping Plover Guardian Program, Operation Burrowing Owl, the Shrubs for Shrikes Program, a Piping Plover census and the Rare Plant Rescue Program.

The Fish and Wildlife Development Fund receives 30 percent of the revenue generated from all fur, angling and hunting licenses sold in the province. For more information, visit www.se.gov.sk.ca.

SPLASH! Festival Held at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

The SPLASH! Water Festival was held July 22nd at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. The festival was intended to provide a fun, educational experience for people of all ages through a variety of activities, each with a focus on exploring the role of water in our everyday lives.

This was the third year the SPLASH! Water Festival was held at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. The event was previously held as part of Canada's Parks Day, an annual nationwide celebration to showcase our parks and historic sites.

Activities included outdoor games, pond dipping, water-related craft activities, boating, "Water Olympics" in the pool, traditional First Nations storytelling, and many others. The festival also featured an evening concert in the amphitheatre from well-known singer and music educator, Dr. Don Waite.

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Introducing Chad MacPherson and Allison Mochoruk

Chad MacPherson is the Stewardship Coordinator for the Moose Jaw River Watershed Stewards Inc. Chad convocated from the University of Regina this spring with a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography. His role as Stewardship Coordinator is to lead the Agri-Environmental Group Plan (AEGP) and to implement the Moose Jaw River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan. The AEGP is currently approved for the following Beneficial Management Practices: Wintering Site Management, Riparian Area Management and Erosion Control Structures (Riparian). Under these practices, fifty percent funding is available on projects such as cross fencing, solar watering systems, gully stabilization, buffer strips and native rangeland restoration.

Allison Mochoruk was hired as the Agriculture Technician for the Moose Jaw River Watershed Stewards Inc. in May of 2006. She received her Diploma from Lethbridge Community College in Environmental Assessment and Restoration. Allison's role with the watershed includes conducting riparian health assessments, managing and surveying for leafy spurge and other noxious weeds, and coordinating workshops.

In addition to the Stewardship Coordinator and Agriculture Technician, the Moose Jaw River Watershed Stewards Inc. are currently in the process of hiring an administration person to assist with the implementation of the programs. Both Chad and Allison have been very busy this summer hosting field days and meeting with producers within the watershed.

For more information on the Moose Jaw River Watershed Stewards Inc. contact Chad MacPherson or Allison Mochoruk at (306) 691-3396.

Well Decommissioning Field Days Coming Soon

Saskatchewan Watershed Authority staff will be hosting a number of well decommissioning field days at locations throughout the province this fall.

Well decommissioning field days give people a chance to see first-hand how to properly seal a water well. Wells which are no longer in use but have not been properly decommissioned provide a direct pathway for contaminants to reach the aquifer. With a large percentage of Saskatchewan's population relying on groundwater as their primary water source, it is important that we take steps to protect it.

In addition to watching a demonstration, attendees can also get information on funding assistance available for decommissioning wells. For more information on upcoming field days, please contact your nearest Saskatchewan Watershed Authority office or visit www.swa.ca.

A Partnership for Source Water Protection Plan Implementation

The Lower Souris Watershed Committee Inc. has signed Memorandums of Understanding with both the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and Ducks Unlimited Canada to begin the implementation of the Lower Souris River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan. These documents outline a collaboration of efforts and funding required to implement the key actions contained in the plan.

The Government of Saskatchewan's 2006-2007 Budget provides up to $25,000 to assist with the salary, office and travel expenses associated with hiring a local coordinator to oversee the implementation of each completed source water protection plan. Ducks Unlimited Canada is providing another $15,000 for the implementation of this plan.

Photo courtesy Jeanne Gervais, the Redvers Optimist

Pictured are (l-r): John Van Eaton, Chair, Pipestone Creek Watershed Advisory Committee; Ross Madsen, Chair, Four Creeks Watershed Advisory Committee; Warren Steeves, Chair, Antler River Watershed Advisory Committee; Jim Cairns, Pipestone Creek Watershed Advisory Committee; Tom Harrison, Saskatchewan Watershed Authority; and (seated) Elaine Morgan, R.M. of Stortbeaks No. 31.

For more information on the Lower Souris River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan, visit www.swa.ca.

The Moose Jaw River Watershed

Photo courtesy of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

In the spring of 2003, the Government of Saskatchewan initiated a watershed planning process in the Moose Jaw River Watershed. The process focused on identifying threats to source water and providing strategies to address those threats.

Residents of the watershed, through the Moose Jaw River Watershed Advisory Committees, have completed the second Source Water Protection Plan in Saskatchewan. This plan was reviewed by the public at a series of open houses held in March of this year, and is now moving toward implementation. The process was supported by the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and other agencies.

Copies of the Moose Jaw River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan can be obtained by contacting:

Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
#420 - 2365 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 4K1
Phone: (306) 787-6958

For more information on watershed planning and implementation in the Moose Jaw River Watershed, contact:

John Durbin
Senior Resource Planner
Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Phone: (306) 953-2875
E-mail: MooseJawPlan@swa.ca

Congratulations on a Job Well Done!

The Moose Jaw River Source Water Protection Plan would not have been possible without the understanding, perseverance and dedication of the Watershed Advisory Committee members, nor without the valuable advice and information provided by the Moose Jaw River Watershed Technical Committee. The members of the committees are:

Moose Jaw River Watershed Advisory Committee

Member	*Organization*
Don Allewell	R.M. of Norton No. 69
Terry Anthony	R.M. of Baildon No. 131
Jim Armstrong	R.M. of Redburn No. 130
Robert Badley	Town of Rouleau
Don Fox	Baildon Water Users Association
Keith Gadd	Old Guard CAA #38
Rick Gailbraith	Town of Milestone
Ken Hawkes	City of Moose Jaw (MACE)
Wade Hicke	R.M. of Terrell No. 101
Barry Johnson	Lynbrook Golf Club
Ryan Johnson	City of Moose Jaw
Cal Jorstad	R.M. of Moose Jaw No. 161
Richard Linton	R.M. of Caledonia No. 99
Greg Metz	R.M. of Bratt's Lake No. 129
Ron Michell	Deer Ridge Golf and Country Club
Terry Moon	R.M. of Scott No. 98
Roy Morrison	R.M. of Pense No. 160
Karyn Mossing	Trans Canada Trail
Wally Nelson	Long Creek Golf and Country Club
Darol Owens	R.M. of Moose Jaw No. 161
Fran Petruic	Dunnet Regional Park
Darcy Phillips	R.M. of Caledonia No. 99
Brad Pingert	R.M. of Norton No. 69
Susanne Richard	Moose Jaw Wild Animal Park Conservation Society Inc.
Milt Rigetti	Madrid CAA #142
Brian Stirton	Old Guard CAA #38
Merlin Thompson	M & T Feedlot
Doug Thul	R.M. of Redburn No. 130
Don Watson	R.M. of Brokenshell No. 68
Bob Wills	Wakamow Valley Authority
Dale Wilson	Canadian Pacific Railway

Source Water Protection Plan

Photo courtesy of City of Moose Jaw

Surface water runoff from urban areas is one of many issues that the committees considered while developing the plan.

Committee members visited a number of sites throughout the watershed to gain an understanding of how water is used.

Thunder Creek Watershed Advisory Committee

Member	*Organization*
Sandra Bathgate	Thunder Creek Irrigation District
John Beck	R.M. of Eyebrow No. 193
Neil Crosbie	R.M. of Caron No. 162
Robert Drake	R.M. of Eyebrow No. 193
Mike Gorgichuk	R.M. of Caron No. 162
Chuck Guillaume	R.M. of Marquis No. 191
Danny Hicks	R.M. of Rodgers No. 133
Lorne Jackson	Riverhurst Irrigation District
Charles Johnson	R.M. of Wheatlands No. 163
Dale Johnson	Village of Mortlach
Cal Jorstad	R.M. of Moose Jaw No. 161
Jarrod Klassen	Thunder Creek Irrigation District
Ellis Leaman	R.M. of Chaplin No. 164
Dave Marzolf	R.M. of Enfield No. 194
Wayne Phillips	Village of Caronport
Joe Searle	R.M. of Wheatlands No. 163
Kim Searle	R.M. of Wheatlands No. 163
Gary Stirling	R.M. of Wheatlands No. 163
Garth Swanson	R.M. of Marquis No. 191
Pete Thiessen	Village of Caronport
Dale Young	R.M. of Wheatlands No. 163

Moose Jaw River Watershed Technical Committee

Member	*Organization*
Twyla Armstrong	Moose Jaw Creek Watershed Association #2
Jim Babcock	Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Carol Churchward	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Wendi Dehod	Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Martin Grajczyk	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Ross Herrington	Canadian Wildlife Service
Jeff Holland	Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation
Greg Holovach	Saskatchewan Environment
Mai-Lihn Huynh	Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
Ron Jenson	Saskatchewan Environment
Ron Kerr	Saskatchewan Government Relations
Carl Lazurko	Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
Ross MacDonald	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Serena McIver	Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
Clinton Molde	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Jody Oliver	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Kevin O'Neill	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Nolan Shaheen	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Brad Uhrich	Ducks Unlimited Canada
Richard Zitta	Saskatchewan Environment

Moose Jaw River Watershed Planning Team

Member	*Organization*
John Durbin	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Jennifer Nelson	Saskatchewan Watershed Authority

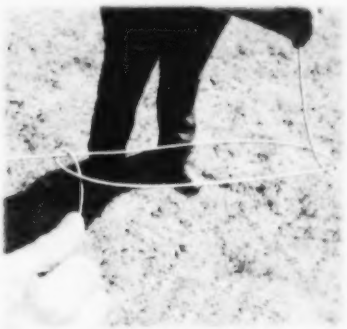
Electric Fencing a Useful Tool for Producers

Electric fencing demonstrations were hosted by the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority in August for producers in the Gravelbourg, Verwood and Mitchelton areas. Wil Rex of Gallagher Power Fencing Systems Inc. was on hand to provide expertise on fencing equipment needs and to give a hands-on demonstration of how to install and make use of electric fencing.

Julie MacKenzie, a Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Range Ecology Technician, helps producer Louis Alix tie the high tensile wire around a post to make a smooth corner, while producer Ron Wheeler looks on.

Julie MacKenzie, a Range Ecology Technician with the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, says an electric fence with two or three wires can be used as perimeter fence, while an electric fence with one or two wires can be used for cross-fencing to divide a pasture into paddocks. Rotational grazing with a paddock system can improve the health and productivity of the pasture by providing the grass with rest from use after grazing.

Wil Rex of Gallagher Power Fencing displays an energizer used to supply power to the electric fence. A MR2500, seen here, can be used to power approximately 50 km of fence.



Bending the wire in an over-under-over-under fashion into a 'figure 8' knot, as seen here, is the easiest and least expensive way to join high tensile wire.

"A single wire permanent electric fence, or a temporary electric fence may be just the solution to improve the condition of your riparian areas in the spring or to keep cattle from crossing those saline sloughs between you and your neighbour," says MacKenzie.

Temporary electric fences can also be used in the short-term to keep livestock out of riparian areas, away from bale stacks or granaries, or to do more intensive rotational grazing.

Several producers attended the electric fencing demonstration held recently in the Verwood area.

Not only is electric fence relatively inexpensive, fast and easy to use, it can also be used on your farm as a tool to help protect and improve native prairie and valuable wildlife habitat for endangered species or species-at-risk. Just a few of those species include the Piping Plover that uses saline shorelines, the Sprague's Pipit that uses healthy native prairie, and the Burrowing Owl that uses tame forages for hunting.

Electric Fencing Tips

DO

- *Use a good quality energizer (fencer) – at least one joule of power.*
- *Use galvanized steel ground rods (one 10-foot long, 5/8-inch ground rod per joule of power, or one Gallagher ground rod per three joules of power).*
- *Use high tensile wire.*
- *Use UV-protected insulators.*
- *Build strong corner braces – all of your wire hangs off them.*
- *Place posts 45 feet apart for perimeter fencing.*
- *Purchase an electric fence tester to measure volts on the fence (at least 2500 volts is needed to control cattle).*
- *Install a lightning diverter to prevent damage to the energizer.*

DON'T

- *Mix electric fence wire with barbed wire fencing. Don't electrify barbed wire.*
- *Use rubber (such as old tire tubes) as insulators – rubber conducts electricity!*
- *Attach electric wire directly to the post – use an insulator.*
- *Run main power supply through the gate – go underground with double insulated cable instead, or place high tensile wire high enough up so that cattle can move freely underneath, and use white electric fence tape for a gate that is very visible.*
- *Make one wire on your fence a ground wire – live wires could get tangled with the ground wires and short out your fence.*
- *Use rebar as a ground rod – use galvanized steel only.*
- *Use any copper on an electric fence – it can become corroded when combined with galvanized wire or steel and will not conduct electricity.*
- *Kink high tensile electric fence wire – it'll break.*
- *Tighten the wire too tight. Allow for expansion and contraction in the winter – you should be able to step on the top wire and push it to the ground.*

Getting to Know the South Saskatchewan River Watershed

Members of the North and Diefenbaker Watershed Advisory Committees in front of the South Saskatchewan River near Saskatoon.

On July 26 and 27, members of the South Saskatchewan River Watershed Advisory Committee took part in a field tour of selected sites throughout the watershed. The tour was intended to give the committee members a better understanding of water usage in this area.

Some of their tour stops included ...

...the Beaver Creek Conservation Area south of Saskatoon to view the Interpretive Centre and the nature trails. Jennifer Nelson of Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin spoke about their work in the watershed, and their 'Water Watchdog' and 'Click on Climate' programs.

...the PCS Potash Cory mining operation near Saskatoon to hear from Mark Getzlaf, the Director of Environment. The protection of groundwater and disposal of waste water was discussed. Tour participants also viewed potash samples in different forms.

...the spur dyke on the South Saskatchewan River near the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. Al Young, Senior Aquatic Ecologist with the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority talked about the Pike Lake pumping station and the impact on fish habitat.

...the Westside Irrigation Project near Outlook. Doug Ball, Chairman of the Westside Steering Committee spoke about the potential development of irrigating the land to the west side of the South Saskatchewan River from the Gardiner Dam to Asquith.

During their tour, members of the West Watershed Advisory Committee learned from environmental consultant Pam Kirwin, the procedures and regulations for 'landspray' – spraying drilling mud on privately-owned land. The mud provides nutrients and moisture for producers.

The West tour also stopped at Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food's Millie pasture near Maple Creek. Manager Glen Purves spoke about the watering system for cattle on this pasture.

A tour of the North portion of the South Saskatchewan River Watershed is planned for October 11, 2006.

Hello Voluntary Stewards!

Thank you for taking the time to read the Fall 2006 edition of the ***Prairie Update!*** As always, we hope you have enjoyed the articles included in this newsletter, and we welcome any comments you have. And of course, our sincere thanks go to those who agreed to share their stories with us in these pages.

You can find more information on the Prairie Stewardship Program in back issues of this newsletter. These issues, as well as interactive maps featuring other stewardship project demonstration sites, can be viewed on our website at www.swa.ca.

Angela Bethune
Ryan Lorge

Coming Events

For more information please contact the following staff members in the office nearest you:

North Battleford
Jeremy Brown at 446-7460

Regina
Etienne Soulodre at 787-0661

Swift Current
Bob Springer at 778-8301
Krista Connick at 778-8280
Julie MacKenzie at 774-4543

Yorkton
Jason Puckett at 786-5845

Photo courtesy of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Our Gracious Supporters

- *Canadian Wildlife Service*
- *Fisheries and Oceans Canada*
- *Ducks Unlimited Canada*
- *Environment Canada through Eco-ACTION*
- *Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk*
- *National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (U.S.)*
- *Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan*
- *Nature Conservancy of Canada*
- *Nature Saskatchewan*
- *Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*
- *Nevada Department of Wildlife*
- *North American Wetlands Conservation Council*
- *Prairie Conservation Action Plan*
- *Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*
- *Saskatchewan Environment through the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund*
- *SaskPower*
- *SaskPower - Shand Greenhouse*
- *Wildlife Habitat Canada*
- *Wyoming Game and Fish Department*

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority is offering a special incentive to voluntary stewards who wish to attend the 8th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference and Workshop, coming up March 1st to 3rd, 2007 in Regina.

Any voluntary steward that registers for the event will be eligible to receive a $100 reimbursement from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. At the current early-bird prices, that means that you can attend this prestigious event for only $75!

The 8th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference and Workshop will feature presentations and workshop sessions dealing with such topics as ecological services, endangered species, climate change and water management, among many others. It is crucial that voluntary stewards provide their input to these discussions.

Funds are limited, and only the first 20 voluntary stewards who have registered will receive the rebate. A receipt for the full conference registration must be submitted to the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority to be eligible. For more information, contact Jennifer Lohmeyer at (306) 787-8707.

Share Your Ideas!

If you have comments or ideas about this newsletter, please contact Angela Bethune at 787-8043 or e-mail: angela.bethune@swa.ca or Ryan Lorge at 787-6958 or e-mail: ryan.lorge@swa.ca.

For specific information about the Prairie Stewardship Program, please contact Jennifer Lohmeyer at 787-8707 or e-mail: jennifer.lohmeyer@swa.ca.

Prairie Update is a publication of:

Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
#420 – 2365 Albert Street
Regina, SK S4P 4K1
Phone: (306) 787-0726
Fax: (306) 787-0780

Website: www.swa.ca

Saskatchewan Watershed Authority